

Title: Jarsali And The Treant

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Jarsali Oaklimbs was a sylvan elf of the truest grain-even to the point of shunning others of her race, preferring instead the company of the woodlands well over that

of her fellows. How her heart came to be full of suspicion and bitterness at her mortal comrades, no one knew; they only knew that Jarsali was a strange girl, even for an elf. Nothing assuaged the

sorrow in her soul save the nearness of the primordial trees. her wandering from the camp took her deeper and deeper into the virgin forest, to places where even few elves had ever

set foot. In the heart of the wood, she found a living tree holding court with his minions. Her shock was Remember, this was agreat. Remember, this was atime before the elves hadspread

across the world, and they knew little of all its races. Few hadever heard of a treant, much less seen one. Although her tribe had, Jarsali had never heeded the lessons of her compatriots,

no desire to learn from their experiences.
Entranced by the sight

of the treant, she crept closer to investigate.

Suddenly, great bark-covered limbs from a nearby "tree" lifted her

from the ground and held her captive. The animated oak brought her before its liege.

Jarsali stood prisoner before the treant lord, and something in her heart cracked and was

set free. The elf maiden fell instantly in love with the enduring beauty of the craggy wood before her. The treant eyed Jarsali's flushed cheeks and bright eyes.

Suthurithidan, the son of

Garanahil the First Treant, saw hidden behind the elf's truculent air a spirit of fire that could not be quenched. It was the treant's first true look at an elf, and he was entranced. With a

silent flicker of his twiggy finger, he commanded the tree to release the elf maid. The two stared at each other, sunlight filtering though the dappled leaves; then Suthurithida

and melted into the forest.

Jarsali returned to her camp. Her companions were amazed at her newly softened manner, so changed was it from her usual self. They wondered

what could have happened on her latest excursion into the woods, but none said anything, feeling only gratitude and not caring the cause. When Jarsali crept away a week later,

unable to forget the

treant Suthurithidan, some few smiled, thinking perhaps she had found a lover with a nearby tribe. One elf, however, did not smile-he frowned. Azalarer had thought to wed Jarsali himself, for he

lusted after the elf maid. The words of his people were an irritant to his pride.

Jarsali found again the treant lord, and this time neither could deny the truth of how well their

souls matched the other. The initial exhilaration inspired by their first meeting provided the impetus for the rest of their relationship, and the feelings between two such dissimilar beings deepened.

But Azalarer grew suspicious of Jarsali's continued change. He and his cohorts followed her into the depths of the forest. Intent only upon meeting her love, Jarsali's ordinarily sharp hearing

did not warn her of this pursuit. Azalarer and the other found her then, and they beheld a sight none had ever thought to witness in all their years: An elf maid embraced by a living tree!

Azalarer's heart grew black. He taunted Jarsali cruelly and incited the prejudices of his comrades. In righteous wrath, they tore Jarsali from the arms of the surprised tree lord and

spirited her back to camp. There Azalarer

fanned the flames of xenophobia. The elves had never heard of such a strange coupling; they were outraged that Jarsali's chosen was not

even humanoid, much less elven. They locked her behind a stout wood stockade and angrily began debating what to do with her. Jarsali called upon all the elven gods of the

forest and love, and she called upon the gods of Suthurithidan, too. She prayed for both release from the stockade and from her elven form, that she might not have to endure the cruelties

the elves inflicted upon her in the name of racial purity. The gods heard her pleas: They gave her the answer to one by granting the other. Inside the stockade, Jarsali's body stiffened.

Her hair grew long and turned green, and her limbs became limbs of wood and not flesh. Her feet sought the cracks in the ground, and she extended her new roots into the soil beneath.

Shouldering aside the flimsy blockade, she forced her way into the sylvan camp. The elves scattered before her. Some prostrated themselves in abject terror, fearing for their

lives. Azalarer, along with those who had been deliberating Jarsali's fate, came forth from the council chambers. The elf's heart turned ever

more black and cracked
with rage; he grabbed a

firebrand but the council
restrained him. With
utmost respect, they
bowed to Jarsali and bade
her good speed and clean
water, for her
transformation showed
them that her love was

real—that nothing they
could say or do would
change this simple fact.
With only the faintest
bow, Jarsali turned to
the forest and was
reunited with her true
love. The elves watched

her go with a new found
respect; to this day, the
sylvan elves and the
treants share the custody
of the woods.

Moral: True love
transcends race—and
sometimes even species.